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September 5, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Vice President Johnson's report on his visit to Berlin
August 21, 1961

Present: The President, the Vice President, Secretary of State,
General Clay, Mr. Bohlen, General Taylor, Mr. Bundy

The Vice President reported first on his conversation with Chancellor Adenauer who had been undecided about any economic sanctions in response to the sector closing. The Chancellor thought that Mayor Brandt's reaction had been stupid. He had indicated his willingness to extend conscription with an announcement of the decision after the German election. Mayor Brandt had been greatly encouraged by the visit and almost apologetic about his letter. The Vice President had spoken frankly to him about the importance of firmness in the Berlin leadership, and Brandt in return had indicated his gratitude for the President's prompt and forthright response to the situation, both in sending the Vice President and in his candid letter to Brandt. The Vice President then described in moving terms the character of the reception he had received from the West Berliners, and how deeply moving it had been to understand how fully the Americans are relied on in that city.

It was generally agreed that we had underestimated the impact of the sector closing on the West Berliners. While no one supposed that the Soviets had acted out of anything but necessity, they had in fact produced a heavy impact on West German morale. It would now be important, the Vice President emphasized, to think and act in terms of a new future for West Berlin, since many of its old purposes would not be valid while the division of Berlin continued. Meanwhile, we would wish to review all our arrangements in order to insure clearer, sharper lines of communication and quicker reaction. Mr. Bohlen believed that we should be prepared to "react" to specific

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provocations. General Clay reported that our people in Berlin were good, but it was generally felt that the President and his Washington associates needed to know the Berlin and German group better. (The President's later decision to send General Clay to Berlin as his Personal Representative represents an alternative solution to this problem of having in Berlin a well-trusted individual.)

McGeorge Bundy

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The Vice President has given me an account of his remarkably successful visit to Germany and Berlin. His visit has made clear the extraordinary trust ~~and confidence~~ which the people of West Berlin place in our support for their freedom. The situation in Berlin remains serious, and there will be much for all of us to do in support of freedom there in the months ahead. But I would like now to express my personal thanks to the Vice President, to General Clay and their associates for unusual service in this demonstration of the purpose of the United States.

*and the heavy responsibility of
places
- for
us.*